



NEWS

15th January 2004

Saturday night's all right for fighting



Backyard wrestling scene thriving among teenagers

WHEN a battle-scarred Brad Pitt gave members of his secret fighting network a quick run-down of the rules, he made it quite clear that "you do not talk about Fight Club".

His gang of urban warriors also were under no doubt that when someone yells "stop", the fight is over, and shirts and shoes are not allowed.

There was no mention of raiding the garden shed.

However, it seems that the idea behind David Fincher's controversial and violent film may not be an urban myth after all. Not only are clandestine groups of teenagers holding regular - and voluntary - fights in Scotland's own backyard, they have added a few rules of their own. The result? Hardcore Garden Wrestling.

For the uninitiated, Hardcore Garden Wrestling (HGW), or backyard wrestling as it is more commonly known in Scotland, involves staging a wrestling match against a backdrop of music and commentary. Fights take place in back gardens, parks and car parks. Weapons are encouraged - the more innovative the use of domestic appliances the better.

Lock Up Your Sons, a Channel 4 documentary which was first broadcast in October and repeated this week, highlighted how a thriving "backyard scene" was emerging among British teenagers. It showed groups in their mid-to-late teens hitting each other with props. Road signs covered in thumbtacks were a favourite.

"The only rules are fight until you get knocked out or submit," said Kid Krazy, an 18-year-old fan who heads his own gang of backyarders in Netherton, near Motherwell.

"We use makeshift weapons. If you see anything in the garden shed, you just grab it. People usually compete to find the most creative weapon.

"You can wrap a baseball bat in barbed wire, and set it on fire. I once saw a football dressed in petrol."

Fights - or "carnages" - are generally organised online. A stage is set up and a crowd assembled. Like the popular American show, World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), which spawned Hulk Hogan, each fight is highly choreographed with wrestlers creating colourful alter-egos, such as T-Bone, Hellraiser and Shotgun Pete.

Mr Krazy explains: "There are occasionally broken bones, but there have not been any deaths. It's just guys messing about."

George Chignell, of Firecracker Films, which produced the documentary said: "The events are actually quite theatrical and creative. It is perfectly safe - at worst there is a little grazing. It's not gratuitously violent at all."

Mr Chignell insisted that parents know about their children's penchant for HGW, preferring them to hit each other with planks in the back garden than indulging in other dangerous teenage vices.

He said: "Most think it's better that, than drinking beer and watching telly."

However, Roger Vincent, of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, disagreed. He warned that there could be serious consequences, should backyarding turn nasty.

"It is the individual's responsibility, but imagine how they would feel if they really injured someone. You can't ban this. How can you? Often these crazes come and go, and this is probably just bravado and kids bragging. We just hope that someone doesn't get badly hurt."

One reformed backyarder, who wished to remain anonymous, is less enthusiastic about the horticultural fight club which kept him and his friends entertained in Rutherglen for nearly two years.

Now 17, he used to organise fights every two to three weeks, before giving it up to train as a professional wrestler.

"We used to hit each other with fluorescent light tubes - they look good when they shatter and explode, but they don't really hurt. We would also glue broken glass to a board and then fall on to it - that was what you had to do to win.

"Now I see how stupid it is."



Within profession wrestling circles, backyarders like Kid Krazy are regarded as pests who do not know their grapple from their gladioli, rather than dangerous hooligans.

Kenny Morrison, a professional coach, said his Renfrewshire club is attracting increasing interest from teenagers with experience outside the wrestling ring.

He said: "They are trying to emulate the actions of professional wrestlers without the skills. It's a big fantasy - just kids play-wrestling with mum's pots and pans and bric-a-brac, fighting in the flower beds. But without proper training, you can do damage to yourself and your opponent."

However, Mr Morrison added: "The main problem is that their parents probably have no idea, so if your son comes in and asks to borrow the kettle before running out the back door, it might be worth asking him what

it's for."

HOW IT BEGAN

Hardcore Garden Wrestling, or backyarding, appears to have gathered momentum in America, where World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) and the considerably more dangerous Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW) have a huge fan base.

WWE wrestling star Jeff Hardy, of tag team the Hardy Boys, who is famed for his amateur wrestling past, is popular with fans of the craze.

The trend has also been bolstered by the cult stunt shows, such as MTV's Jackass, where a group of young Americans put their pain thresholds to the limit.

Online forums where HGW fans can post messages are also central to the craze.



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By David Irvine | [@divirvine](#)
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By Caitlyn Dewar
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